

AFTER THE PASSION

Answering Questions People Have After Seeing
Mel Gibson's movie: *The Passion of the Christ*

Pt. 2

IN THE MOVIE *THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST*, WHAT IS FACT AND WHAT IS FICTION?

Getting inside the head of Mel Gibson, the Maker of The Passion of The Christ.

I want to talk this morning about the incredible movie co-written and directed by Mel Gibson – *The Passion of the Christ*. Because many of you have questions prompted by the movie, I would like to separate from the movie what is Biblical and what are plausible embellishments of what, in scripture, gets only brief, scant mention.

Now I don't mean for this to be an expose or critique of the movie. I am in favor of the movie. I believed in Mel Gibson's vision for it before, and now that I have seen it twice, I am even more for it. As a Christian, I have found myself loving my faith more than I have ever loved it. As a Pastor and leader in Christ's church, I am grateful to have such a gift and tool to help us in presenting the price that Jesus paid for our redemption. I believe countless thousands of souls will come to know the Lord because of this movie both at home and abroad, and though there is much that fills the gaps of this movie that come from two women I do not personally endorse as saints or prophets, I see nothing wrong in Mel's use of their visions to embellish or otherwise add drama to the movie, so long as the Bible becomes the sole and singular authority on which we wean people off the movies portrayal of the Passion of Jesus Christ, and onto the Gospels themselves.

I like what Brad Majors did the morning after the movie. He read all four gospel accounts of the sufferings of Christ for himself, just to set the record straight. That the movie prompted him to do that blesses me, and encourages me.

Because scripture is silent on certain details, Mel Gibson drew from extra-biblical sources to craft his 'Passion.'

"I wanted to be true to the Gospels," Gibson has said of his goals in creating "The Passion of the Christ." In an introduction to a book about his movie, he wrote, *"Holy Scripture and accepted visions of the Passion were the only possible texts I could draw from to fashion a dramatic film."*

SCENE 1: AGONY IN THE GARDEN

FACT: Jesus did in fact suffer in the garden of Gethsemane, as he faced the mysterious "cup" His heavenly Father was requiring Him to drink; it was also factual that his disciples kept falling asleep because of the immense emotional exhaustion and sorrow they were feeling (Luke 23:45).

FICTION: Jesus never said to his three sleeping disciples: ***"Don't let the others see me like this"***

FICTION: The presence of Satan in the Garden:

Although it is plausible that the devil was tempting Jesus at this time, we are not told this in the Gospels. The filmmaker is taking artistic license here, at this point. Gibson is portraying the devil's attempt to dissuade Jesus from accepting the cross and fulfilling his mission. This is normal behavior for him who is called "the tempter". He loves to take golden opportunities to undermine our resolve to do God's will in the midst of intense suffering and agitation of spirit. Mel Gibson's inspiration for placing the devil in the Garden tempting Jesus came from the visions of Anne Catherine Emmerich, entitled: THE DOLOROUS PASSION. Here are a few of the things she claimed she saw in the garden of Gethsemane while Jesus was in agony:

"He fell on his face, overwhelmed with unspeakable sorrow, and all the sins of the world displayed themselves before him, under countless forms and in all their real deformity."

"...Satan, who was enthroned amid all these horrors, and even filled with diabolical joy at the sight of them, let loose his fury against Jesus, and displayed before the eyes of his soul, increasing awful visions, at the same time addressing his adorable humanity in words such as these: 'Takest thou even this sin upon thyself? Art thou willing to bear it's penalty? Art thou prepared to satisfy for all these sins.'"¹

Gibson explains his portrayal of the devil by saying,

"Evil takes on the form of beauty, it is almost beautiful – it is the great ape of God (imitates). But the mask is askew. There is always something wrong. Evil masquerades but if your antennae is up, you'll detect it."

FICTION: The serpent in the garden that crawled out from under the devil's robe toward Jesus: There is nothing in the Gospels about a serpent or any other kind of animal coming near Jesus. This also was influenced by THE DOLOROUS PASSION. After recounting in her vision the continuous, unrelenting temptations and torments of the devil throughout Jesus ordeal in the garden, Anne sees a vision of the serpent Gibson included in this scene:

¹ p. 100

“Amid all these apparitions, Satan held a conspicuous place, under various forms, which represented different species of sins. Sometimes he appeared under the form of a gigantic black [robed] figure, sometimes under those of a tiger, a fox, a wolf, a dragon, or a serpent...At first I seldom saw the serpent; soon, however, it made it’s appearance, with a crown upon its head...”²

FICTION: The crushing of the serpent’s head. Again, this is not found in the Gospel accounts of Jesus’ agony in Gethsemane. Be that as it may, it is a depiction of what was foretold in Genesis 3:15, which said:

“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.”

Was this passage of scripture referring to what Jesus would do in the garden of Gethsemane? No. It was referring to Christ’s victory on the cross, made so by His resurrection (Colossians 2:14-15). It was at the cross, not in the garden that the devil’s head was legally crushed, signaling his inevitable, final defeat when Christ returns, which is depicted in the 2nd to the last scene.

Gibson put this scene in to depict Jesus’ reaching the point of final resolve and acceptance of the very thing that terrified and unnerved him before: “the cup” of the wrath of God. Showing his foot crushing the head of the serpent was meant to be a foreshadow of Satan’s defeat at the cross. Therefore, the crushing of the serpent’s head was taken from the biblical, but not in proper context or sequence according to Genesis 3:15.

FACT: The betrayal of Jesus by Judas, with a kiss, was Biblical, as was the cutting off of Malchus’ ear, and it’s miraculous reattachment by Jesus. The actual scenario reads like this in John 18:1-11

¹When he had finished praying, Jesus left with his disciples and crossed the Kidron Valley. On the other side there was an olive grove, and he and his disciples went into it.

²Now Judas, who betrayed him, knew the place, because Jesus had often met there with his disciples. ³So Judas came to the grove, guiding a detachment of soldiers and some officials from the chief priests and Pharisees. They were carrying torches, lanterns and weapons.

² p. 113-114

⁴Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen to him, went out and asked them, "Who is it you want?"

⁵"Jesus of Nazareth," they replied.

"I am he," Jesus said. (And Judas the traitor was standing there with them.) ⁶When Jesus said, "I am he," they drew back and fell to the ground.

⁷Again he asked them, "Who is it you want?"

And they said, "Jesus of Nazareth."

⁸"I told you that I am he," Jesus answered. "If you are looking for me, then let these men go." ⁹This happened so that the words he had spoken would be fulfilled: "I have not lost one of those you gave me."

¹⁰Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant, cutting off his right ear. (The servant's name was Malchus.)

¹¹Jesus commanded Peter, "Put your sword away! Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?"

Furthermore, Luke 22:51 tells us:

"And he touched the man's ear and healed him."

FICTION: Mel Gibson adds the part where Malchus sits there in shock, Staring off in the distance, obviously amazed and confused, and going through a spiritual odyssey of sorts. Although this addition in the film represents artistic license, it is a very logical one. Put yourself in Malchus' place, and I am sure you will agree. So again, this is not part of the Biblical narrative of what happened, but it still remains within the realm of plausibility.

FACT: The disciples are shown running away as they led Jesus away from the garden to the High Priests court. This did in fact happen. Even his own friends abandoned Jesus. But everyone except Judas was recovered after He arose from the dead.

FICTION: The beatings and brutality Jesus received at the hands of the guards as they led him away from the garden to the Court of Caiaphas is not found in the gospels. Plausible? Yes. Biblical? No.

When Jesus is first being beaten in Gethsemane, Mary awakens, as if from a nightmare. Sensing Jesus' pain, she says, in Hebrew, ***"Why is this night unlike any other night?"*** which is taken from the first question of the Jewish Passover liturgy. Mel Gibson inserted this for dramatic effect, and to connect the moment of Christ's passion with Passover lamb in Exodus. Mary's alleged soul connection with Jesus, enabling her to feel everything he was feeling emotionally, and that made her aware of the things he was

aware of, comes principally from the writings of both Emmerich and Mary of Agreda, another source of inspiration for Mel Gibson.

FICTION: As the film transitions from the garden to Caiaphas' court, or judgment hall, we are allowed into the mind of Judas Iscariot, from the perspective of Mel Gibson via Anne Emmerich's vision. When, after the trial, Judas attempt to return the blood money of his betrayal, 30 pieces of silver, he is met with disgust and rejection by the High Priest and his cohorts. This was Biblical, but embellished. They kept the 30 pieces of silver to use to buy a burial plot called the Potter's Field, or "Field of blood" in which to bury him later.

But most of the rest of what we see of Judas (not all but most) is not found in the gospels. For instance:

- Judas running to and fro seeking solace and finding none...
- The part where the soldiers march the chained Jesus to the court of Caiaphas from Annas' house where they mercilessly continue to beat him, and then push him over the side of a bridge and he bangs against the wall before they lift him back up...for a brief moment, Judas and Jesus face each other...
- While they hoist Jesus back up, Judas can be seen skulking down there, reeling under the conviction of what he has done, and just as he begins to get up to sneak away, a demon flashes by, scaring the audience half to death...

These scenes are all additional material added by Gibson off the inspiration of Anne Emmerich, and not in the Gospels. Are they plausible? Somewhat. The Gospel of John records that Judas became demonized when he left the last supper (John 13:24 – ***“as soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him.”***) and the presence of demons in this scene is an interesting touch illustrating his demonization.

Judas is tormented; his lips begin to deteriorate throughout the rest of his appearances in the film, due to gnawing and chewing them. After the trial before the High priest and the Sanhedrin, Judas is obviously mentally distraught about his treachery. He has tried to make things right by going to Caiaphas and attempting to give back the 30 pieces of silver (the price to redeem a slave). The high priest rejects the offer, and dismisses him.

We find him next outside of Caiaphas' court, his face torn and bleeding due to his tearing at himself. What appears at first to be some children, who quit playing when they see him and come over and try to comfort him, portrays Judas insanity. Suddenly, as Judas

curses them (Get away from me, you little satans) and tells them to leave him alone, they begin to taunt and torment him, saying things like **"He curses; perhaps he is cursed"**. It turns out that the children are in fact demons. Their faces suddenly contort into grotesque, deformed dwarves who taunt him. A band of them drive him out of the city and into the Kidron Valley, or Valley of Hinnom (which Jesus used as an example of Gehenna, or Hell: where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth; where the fire ever burns and the worm does not die)...This is how the Dolorous Passion describes this scene:

"rushing to and fro like a madman in the valley of Hinnom: Satan was by his side in a hideous form, whispering in his ear, to endeavor to drive him to despair, all the curses which the prophets had hurled upon this valley, where the Jews formerly sacrificed their children to idols."

The chapter also mentions ***carcasses***:

"They shall go forth, and behold the carcasses of those who have sinned against me, whose worm dieth not, and whose fire shall never be extinguished."

When Judas finally falls and grabs his head, obviously having a mental breakdown, the children suddenly disappear, and for a moment we see Satan standing there. We see a disturbing scene full of double meaning: the camera pans away from the devil, and the shows us a dead and rotting corpse of a donkey (an unclean animal). The sound of buzzing flies and bees gets louder and louder driving Judas mad(Satan is often called Beelzebub, Lord of the flies or dung heap); the donkey is full of maggots, feeding on it's decaying flesh as the sound of buzzing increases. Judas sees a rope tied around the rotting corpse takes it, and hangs himself.

Gibson, inspired by Emmerich's vision is again using artistic license to make the point: Judas is going to hell. Death will not stop his torment but only begin an eternity of it. In fact, we see that even the devil is full of maggots that feed and never die, in his appearance in the garden, when at one point a maggot crawls out of his nose and then back up it again.

Let me give you a few paragraph's from her Emmerich's vision, in order to show you what was in Mel Gibson's head when he portrayed the Judas scenes:

I again beheld him running too and fro like a mad man in the valley of Hinnom: Satan was by his side in a hideous form, whispering in his ear, to endeavor to drive him to

despair, all the curse which the prophets had hurled upon this valley, where the Jews formerly sacrificed their children to idols.

It appeared as if all these maledictions were directed against him, as in these words, for instance: They shall go forth, and behold, the carcasses of those who have sinned against me, whose worm dieth not, and whose fire shall never be extinguished. Then the devil murmured in his ears, 'Cain, where is thy brother Abel? What hast thou done? – his blood cries out to me for vengeance: thou art cursed upon the earth, a wanderer forever.' When he reached the torrent of Cedron, and saw Mount Olivet, he shuddered, turned away, and again the words vibrated in his ear, 'Friend, whereto art thou come? Judas, dost thou betray the Son of Man with a kiss?'

Now in Anne Emmerich's vision, she saw the devil endlessly tormenting Judas without mercy, reminding him of scripture that spoke of the hanging of Ahithophel, one of David's counselors who betrayed him, and later hung himself (in the very spot Judas had come to rest). The Lord of the Flies was there near the putrid remains of dead carcasses covered with worms and maggots, continually repeating such things as ***They are now about to put him to death; thou hast sold him. Knowest thou not the words of the Law, 'He who sells a soul among his brethren, and receives price of it, let him die the death' ?Put an end to thy misery, wretched one; put an end to thy misery.'***

Emmerich ends her vision of Judas with him pulling off his belt, and hanging himself with it, with his intestines bursting out afterward.

SCENE 2: JESUS BEFORE THE HIGH PRIEST AND THE SANHEDRIN

FACT: All the trials Jesus was subjected to (there were 6: before Annas, the Sanhedrin, Caiaphas, Pilate, Herod, and Pilate again) were illegal, both with the Jews and with Pilate, and Herod. Gibson follows the Gospel of John, and so, only shows one trial, with everybody present.

FACT: There were to be four steps in a trial:

- (1) the morning sacrifice,
- (2) the assembling of the judges,
- (3) the examination of the witnesses, and
- (4) debate and balloting on the guilt or innocence of the accused.

The youngest member voted first, then the next youngest, and so forth so the junior jurors were not influenced by the more learned and older judges.

If the accused was acquitted, he was freed at once. If he was convicted, the court met again the next day, rediscussed the evidence, and then re-voted.

This second trial was like an appeal. If a judge had voted "not guilty" the first day, he could not change to "guilty" on the second day; but if he had voted "guilty" on the first day, he could change his vote to "not guilty" for a valid reason. There was no delay in the execution if a person was found guilty on both days. He was led to the place of execution at sundown, given frankincense, and was then stoned or beheaded.

The actual proceedings before the Sanhedrin, however, were illegal because court convened before the morning sacrifice, which was expressly forbidden by Hebrew law. The trial was further illegal because the Sanhedrin was not to meet for capital punishment cases on Friday or on any day before a feast. Further, Christ was illegally condemned on his own uncorroborated testimony.

The judges of the Sanhedrin hated Christ because he had denounced hypocrisy and cleansed the Temple; they had held three meetings to conspire against Him. Having an interest in the subject matter of the trial, the judges should have been disqualified. The verdict of "guilty" was unanimous; court should, therefore, have reconvened the next day. But only about three hours after the first meeting of the Sanhedrin they met again, did not reconsider the evidence, but led Jesus away and delivered him to Pilate. This action was legally unconscionable.

Jesus was first illegally arrested and hauled off to a meeting with the former high Priest, Annas. His son-in-law, Caiaphas, who was the actual High Priest, succeeding Annas, but Annas tended to still act as if he was in power, and the Sanhedrin, which was the religious and political council of the Jewish people, made up of 23 priests, 23 scribes and 23 elders. Annas served as Caiaphas' advisor, and was probably the most influential member of the Sanhedrin. He cont'd to be called the High Priest, just like a retired General is still called General at formal functions. The two of them worked closely together.

In the movie the court fills up with the Sanhedrin and what looks like a mob of onlookers. There is a brief point where the priests are knocking on peoples doors and paying them money to come a bear

false witness about Jesus. Taken loosely from Matthew 26:59-60 where we are told,

"The chief priests and the entire Sanhedrin kept trying to obtain false testimony against Jesus in order to put him to death."

But the idea for the bribes came from the Dolorous Passion where it is written,

"The High Priests now sent for those whom they knew to be the most bitterly opposed to Jesus, and desired them to assemble the witnesses ...The proud Sadducees ...whom Jesus had so often reprov'd before the people, were actually dying for revenge. They hastened to all the inns to seek out those persons whom they knew to be enemies of our Lord, and offer'd them bribes in order to secure their appearance."

The trial, and the guards punching Jesus in the face because they felt he was being disrespectful to Annas, the false witnesses, Peter's denial, were all accurate to the Gospels all things being equal. The presence of the mob was probably exaggerated though.

FICTION: The part where Caiaphas becomes frustrated by the lack of agreement among the false witnesses, and cries out "**You're all under his spell**", along with the scene when Jesus is defended by two Jewish high priests, (who were Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea according to Emmerich) who said "**This entire proceeding is an outrage,**" "**Who called this? Where are the other members of the council?**" and "**This is a travesty--a beastly travesty**" are not in the Bible, but are plausible (merits belief, credible, reasonable).

FICTION: As the trial continues, we are given a brief reprieve and shown Peter denying Jesus. The sequence is right and the portrayal mostly accurate with a little artistic license for dramatic purposes. But Peter's statement to Mary of his denial of Jesus was also artistic license taken from Anne Emmerich. The Dolorous Passion describes this scene like this:

"Peter rushed out ...By the light of the torches he soon recognized John and the Blessed Virgin, but the sight of them only renewed those dreadful feelings of remorse ... 'Mother!' exclaimed Peter, in a dejected tone, 'O, Mother, speak not to me--thy Son is suffering more than words can express: speak not to me! They have condemned him to death, and I have denied him three times.'"

FICTION: Mary's appearance along with John and Mary Magdalena at

the trial at Caiaphas' court, and afterward, when Jesus is imprisoned in the dungeon below, was dramatic and touching, but was added by Gibson, who took his cue from both Mary of Agreda and Anne Emmerich. Mary of Agreda also envisioned Mary present at many pre-crucifixion scenes.

However, Mary crawling around on the floor sensing her son's presence somewhere under the pavement, and stopping at the precise place where, underneath the floor, downstairs in a kind of dungeon, Jesus had been locked up, was a touch of drama not in the scriptures. Most of this was inspired by Mary of Agreda and Sister Anne Catherine Emmerich's dramatic vision.

"The Blessed Virgin ...begged to be taken to some place as near as possible to her Divine Son. John, therefore, led her and the holy women to the front of the prison where Jesus was confined. Mary was with Jesus in spirit, and Jesus was with her; but this loving Mother wished to hear with her own ears the voice of her Divine Son. She listened and heard not only his moans, but also the abusive language of those around him."

Mary of Agreda's "City of God" relates that Jesus was locked

"in one of the subterranean dungeons, a prison cell set apart for the most audacious criminals."

FICTION: Also, from time to time Satan makes cameo appearances for dramatic effect, as he incites the Jewish leaders and mob. Biblical? No. Plausible? Yes, at least the part about the devil. It is very plausible that he was there inciting the riot. Indeed, I think it is probable. It is what he does. He's acting according to his bent. And again, this comes from Anne Emmerich's vision.

FICTION: It is fictitious that Mary prayed a prayer of relinquishment, in which she said: ***"It has begun. So be it."*** It is not found in the gospel accounts, as are any other appearance she has in these preliminary scenes of the film. In the Gospels, Once Jesus Passion begins, Mary isn't mentioned at all, until Jesus is raised up on his cross, when she appears with John and a few other women. Was this something Mary would say? Yes. It is similar to her surrender to Gabriel when told that she, a virgin, would conceive and bear the Christ child.

FACT: Most of the other sequences in this scene adhered pretty much to the Gospels. Jesus was accused of Blasphemy, a sin punishable by death according to the Jewish Law. The High Priest signaled that Blasphemy had been committed by ripping his mantle. If Jesus was just a man, the accusation would have been true. But Jesus was not

just a man, and he proved it by the miraculous signs he did amongst them for three years, besides his miraculous virgin birth. His admission that he was ***“the son of God”*** and that he would come again in glory with the holy angels” sealed his fate, although a person wasn’t supposed to be condemned based off his own testimony alone. But because the Jews no longer had authority to execute those who committed a crime worthy of death, they had to take Jesus to Pontius Pilate, and attempt to get Pilate to condemn him to death.

This fulfilled a number of Old Testament prophecies, some dating all the way back to the creation of man in the book of Genesis 3000 years before. For instance, **Genesis 3:15**, which I already quoted, prophesied of the messiah being born of the ***“seed of woman”***, being temporarily wounded by the ***“seed of the serpent”*** but in the process, terminally crushing it’s head.

Another prophecy foretold the taking of Jesus to Pontius Pilate **Genesis 49:10**

“The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until Shiloh comes to whom it belongs and the obedience of the nations is his.”

Now Jewish historians in Jesus day tell us there was a wide Jewish expectation that the coming of the Messiah would happen within the first century. One of the chief signs to the Jew that this had to happen was that *the scepter* or authority to govern themselves, would be taken from them. Just before Jesus/Shiloh came, Rome took away Israel’s right to rule and govern itself absolutely, by forbidding it the power to execute those whose deeds required the death penalty. Only Roman rulers had the power to execute criminals. For the Jews, this was the sign that *the scepter was gone from Israel*, which was a sign to them of the coming of Shiloh (Shiloh was a reference to the Messiah). So we see in Jesus being sent to Pilate to be condemned to death an incredible fulfillment of a 3000 year old prophecy.

That’s not all. Did you know that the manner of Jesus death was also prophesied? Listen to these foreshadows of Jesus death, written multiple centuries before he was born:

“Dogs have surrounded me; a band of evil men has encircled me, they have pierced my hands and my feet. I can count all my bones; people stare and gloat over me. They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing.” Psalm 22:16-17

“They will look on him, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son.” Zachariah 12:10

Isn't it remarkable that these centuries old prophecies (Psalms were written 10 centuries before Christ! Zeaharia centuries before Christ, predicted that Jesus would condemned by a Roman procurator to die according to Roman execution customs of the day, which was by crucifixion?

Somewhere around this time there is a scene where Jesus has a flashback to when he was a younger man. He sees Mary watching him testing the quality of a new table while she works inside. She comes outside to look at the table and see if he wants something to eat, and she inquires about the table being too high, to which Jesus replies by telling her that that is the way the customer wants it. She makes fun of it, telling him it will never catch on, and Jesus plays with her by splashing her with water. Though drawing from Matthew 13:55's description of Jesus as "***the carpenter's son,***" the scene itself is not in the Bible, and serves only to make the connection of the close ties Jesus had with Mary.

SCENE 3: THE FOURTH TRIAL: BEFORE PONTIUS PILATE

FACT: Pilate's wife is shown having a nightmare. The Bible tells us she had suffered many things because of dreams she had that night about Jesus. She later pleads with him not to hurt Galilean. All this is in Matthew 27:19).

FICTION: Pilate refers to Jewish "rabble"; Pilate asks high priests, "do you always punish your prisoners before they're judged?" Pilate offers Jesus a drink. The dialogue is taken from John 19, and is pretty accurate, except for his dialogue with his wife Claudia about truth. It is also a fact that he was probation with Caesar for inciting other uprisings and riots among the Jews (see cassette – The Silence of the Lamb.)

SCENE 4: THE FIFTH ILLEGAL TRIAL: BEFOR HEROD

FICTION: The implied orgy at Herod's luxurious palace, complete with a Leopard is fictitious. The implied bi-sexuality of Herod is also artistic license, given to his adulterous affair with another man's wife, and his lust for her daughter. Herod's questioning of Jesus "***Are you the one whose birth was foretold?***" is a far stretch from Luke 23:6-12 and 23:8, but are found in Emmerich's vision. Herod did in fact ask him some questions, but they were in regard to performing some magic tricks, or doing a miracle for him

and his guests, along those lines, believing he was the reincarnation of John the Baptist.

SCENE 5: THE SIXTH ILLEGAL TRIAL: BEFORE PONTIUS PILATE

FICTION: All of Pilate's dialogue with his aids and soldiers is added for dramatic effect.

The extent of Pilate's fear of Rome, and the Jewish leaders using this to manipulate him to crucify Jesus were plausible elements, but not taken from the Bible but from The Dolorous Passion, which says Pilate ***"made another attempt for [Jesus'] release; but the Jews instantly threatened to lay an accusation against him before the Emperor. This menace terrified him, and he determined to accede to their wishes, although firmly convinced in his own mind of the innocence of Jesus."***

SCENE 6: THE SCOURGING OF CHRIST

FACT: The horrific scourging of Jesus actually happened, but the Bible writers are reticent to speak of it, giving it only the briefest statements. Biblical references to the scourging of Jesus are: Mt 27:28-31; Mk 15:19; Mt 27:26; Mk 15:15.

FICTION: Before the flogging begins, Jesus quotes Psalm 108: **"My heart is ready, Lord. My heart is ready."** Satan is depicted watching the scourging while cradling a demonic imp, which was meant to be an anti-Marian image mocking Mary's relationship with Jesus, and making his suffering appear futile; Gibson said this was a parody of the famous sculpture called Madonna and Child. **T** Genesis 3:15 – **Serpent's seed** bruising the heel of the woman's seed. The Jewish leaders, along with a mob of people also watch, along with Mary, Magdalena, and John.

FACT: The scene is horrific and visceral, and historically accurate. The Gospels spare us the gruesome details. First, according to Mark, they had him flogged, and they flog Jesus almost to death with thin, long wooden canes. We've heard of the punishment of caning in other countries. The pain is searing, and quickly breaks the skin open by the second blow. Most people today can only endure 6-12 strikes with a rattan cane. Jim Civeisle who played the role of Jesus, was accidentally struck with one of the flogging canes and described it as follows:

"There was a board on my back, about a half-inch thick, so the Roman soldiers wouldn't hit my back. But one of the soldiers missed, hit me flush on the back and ripped the skin right off. I couldn't

scream, I couldn't breathe. It's so painful that it shocks your system. Within a couple of strokes he missed again. There's like a 14-inch scar on my back."³

Then they scourge him with the hideous and cruel Roman Flagellum. The 3 or 4 sets of lictors are big, muscular men, who scourge Jesus not only without mercy, but with a frenzy that comes from bloodlust. They actually enjoy getting his blood on them. They flay the skin off Jesus with a device made up of several leather thongs, studded with shards of pottery, metal, bone, glass, stone, anything that would cut and lacerate.

FICTION: Jewish law only permitted a man to be given a maximum of Forty lashes, for they were considered the most a man could endure without dying, and the most a man could give without being guilty of murder. Emmerich's "Dolorous Passion" and Mary of Agreda's "City of God" describe Jesus' scourging in vivid and excruciating detail; both say demons urged the lictors to new heights of cruelty and blood lust. Emmerich saw Jesus' body during the flogging,

"entirely covered with black, blue, and red marks; the blood was trickling down on the ground ...they made use of a different kind of rod, a species of thorny stick, covered with knots and splinters. These barbarians ...untied Jesus, and again fastened him up with his back turned towards the pillar. ...they recommenced scourging him with even greater fury than before ...The body of our Lord was perfectly torn to shreds."

Emmerich says ***"The Jewish mob was gathered together at some distance from the pillar at which the dreadful punishment was taking place, and Roman soldiers were stationed in different parts round about."***

FACT: Mel Gibson actually held back from showing the total gore of Roman Scourging, because it would have made everybody in the theater get sick to their stomachs. I will go into more explicit detail in the coming weeks.

FICTION: Pilate's subordinate, Abenadar, says "Enough! Your orders were to punish this man, not scourge him to death."

The name Abenadar is not mentioned in the Bible, but Anne Emmerich makes reference to the sympathetic centurion who converts after Jesus' death, saying ***"indeed, this Man was the Son of God!"*** Although a Roman centurion did acknowledge Jesus

³ from an article in NEWSWEEK magazine entitled: Your Want Me to Play Jesus?

in Luke 23:47, his name is never given. Gibson leaves out this statement in his film.

FICTION: There is a touching scene where Pilate's wife gives Mary, with that thousand mile stare of people who have reached the emotional edge of mental anguish, and Mary Magdalene fine cloths which they later use to mop up Jesus' blood; as Mary Magdalene wipes up Jesus' blood, she flashes back to the moment when Jesus, as the movie implies, saved her from being stoned for adultery. A beautiful scene, but not in the gospels in this context. Again, this comes from the Dolorous Passion which records:

"I saw Claudia Procles, the wife of Pilate, send some large pieces of linen to the Mother of God. I know not whether she thought that Jesus would be set free, and that his Mother would then require linen to dress his wounds, or whether this compassionate lady was aware of the use which would be made of her present. ...I soon after saw Mary and Magdalene approach the pillar where Jesus had been scourged; ...they knelt down on the ground near the pillar, and wiped up the sacred blood with the linen which Claudia Procles had sent."

Mary of Agreda's "City of God" says that Mary saved materials stained by Jesus' blood.

Though a medieval pope identified Mary Magdalene as being the adulterous woman described in John 7:53-8:11, the Catholic Church has since repudiated this view of Mary Magdalene. Most Bible scholars today think the two women were distinct characters.

SCENE 7: THE VIA DOLOROSA

FICTION: The gospels do not explicitly record Jesus falling, yet Jesus falls numerous times in the Passion and in the Catholic Stations of the Cross. Mary and company follow Jesus, with Satan looking on in the crowd; Jesus falls, and as she sees him falling, Mary has a flashback, of her rescuing a falling Jesus as a child. She runs to Him to help him, and Jesus looks at her and says: "See, mother, I make all things new" (Rev 21:5)

From his palace, a worried Pilate looks out at Jesus carrying the cross.

Though the gospels do not say Mary accompanied Jesus throughout his journey, Emmerich's The Dolorous Passion and Mary Agreda's City of God describe Mary following the cross via the side streets. According to Emmerich's vision, when Jesus fell, Mary sprang "from the doorway into the midst of the group who were insulting

and abusing him... she threw herself on her knees by his side and embraced him."

The Stations of the Cross, a Catholic devotional, specify three falls also.

FICTION: A Jewish girl helps Jesus wipe his face and tries to give him something to drink. This is not found in scripture but is an old Catholic tradition that comes from The Legend of St. Veronica, a woman who is said to have wiped Jesus' face with a cloth that later bore his image as a gift to her for her kindness. "Veronica wipes the face of Jesus" is included in the Stations of the Cross, a Catholic devotional practice. The Dolorous Passion relates that she held the cloth while Jesus wiped his face himself: She "made her way through the mob, ... reached Jesus, fell on her knees before him, and presented the veil, saying at the same time, 'Permit me to wipe the face of my Lord.' Jesus took the veil in his left hand, wiped his bleeding face, and returned it with thanks." In the movie there is a bloody imprint on the cloth bearing the same image as the one on the shroud of Turin.

The Dolorous Passion" also comments on the woman's name: "Seraphia was the name of the brave woman ...afterwards known by the name of Veronica, which name was given from the words **vera icon** (true portrait or image), to commemorate her brave conduct on this day." Seraphia, not Veronica, is the name listed in the movie's screen credits.

FACT: Simon of Cyrene helping Jesus carry his cross is in the gospels (Mt 27:31b-32; Mk 15:20-b-21; Lk 23:26)

FICTION: In the movie but not the Bible: A Roman soldier calls Jews "impossible people"; another Roman says "Can't you see he can't go on? Help him"; a Roman forces Simon to help Jesus, calling Simon "Jew!" Simon defends Jesus and tells them to stop, saying "I don't care what you do to me"; Simon encourages Jesus, saying "almost there." Though the gospels say little about Simon, a chapter of "The Dolorous Passion" describes him in sympathetic terms: "Simon of Cyrene was filled with indignation and pity...Their cruelty to Jesus so exasperated Simon of Cyrene that he at last exclaimed, 'If you continue this brutal conduct, I will throw down the cross and carry it no farther. I will do so if you kill me for it.'"

SCENE 8: THE CRUCIFIXION

FICTION: The Crucifixion of Christ is found in Mt 27:33; Mk 15:22; Lk 23:33; Jn 19:17. In the movie Jesus crawls on the cross by himself. This is not in the Gospels.

The nails are pounded into his palms, but were probably hammered into his wrists. According to most Bible scholars, the nails would have gone in the wrists, not the middle of the hands. Gibson follows Catholic iconography in choosing the palms of the hands.

A Roman uses a rope to stretch Jesus' arm closer to nail hole, dislocating his shoulder, which was not in the Gospels.

Gibson draws from Emmerich's and Mary of Agreda's graphic visions of the crucifixion process. "The Dolorous Passion" says

"When the executioners had nailed the right hand of our Lord, they perceived that his left hand did not reach the hole they had bored to receive the nail, therefore they tied ropes to his left arm... and pulled the left hand violently until it reached the place prepared for it."

Mary of Agreda's "City of God" says "When they stretched out the other hand, they found that it did not reach up to the auger-hole; for ...the executioners had maliciously set the holes too far apart."

The titulus over his head that reads "King of the Jews" was written in three languages, Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. The movie omits the Greek.

Flashback to communion is Gibson's why of portraying the tie between the cross, last supper and communion.

SCENE 9: TWO THIEVES ARE CRUCIFIED ALONGSIDE JESUS

FACT: Bible reference: Luke 23

FICTION: In the movie but not the Bible: Bird pecks eye of mocking thief

FACT: Roman soldiers take Jesus' clothes. Bible reference: John 23

FICTION: The Roman soldiers rip Jesus' clothes, though John's gospel says they later gambled for his robe because "it had no seam."

FICTION: Mary at the Cross: Bible reference: Mt 27; Mk 15; Lk 23;44
Mary kisses Jesus' feet and cries to Jesus and gets blood on her face. The Dolorous Passion says *"John stood at the foot of the Cross, and wiped the feet of Jesus with his scapular. Magdalene was crouched to the ground in a perfect frenzy of grief behind the Cross."*

SCENE 10: JESUS DIES

FACT: Bible references: Mt 27:51; Jn 19:31-34

FICTION: One tear from heaven drops. Storm begins.

FACT: Earthquake, the temple building is not ruined nor cracks in two but the veil of the temple is torn from top to bottom. Emmerich says the temple's "arch was broken. The ground was heaved up, and many other columns were thrown down in other parts of the Temple."

FICTION: Satan cries out in wrath in the pit. Mary of Agreda describes Satan at the moment of Jesus' death:

"With the last accent He gave up his spirit and inclined his head. By the divine force of these words Lucifer with all his demons were hurled into the deepest caverns of hell...The rout of Lucifer and his angels from Calvary to the abyss of hell was more violent and disastrous than their first expulsion from heaven."

SCENE 11: JESUS IS TAKEN DOWN FROM THE CROSS

FICTION: Jesus' mother, Mary Magdalene, and John take Jesus from the cross (the gospels specify Joseph of Arimathea, but not others). The pieta scene (Mary cradling Jesus' body) and the tableau of nails and crown of thorns recall Catholic iconography called The Pieta. **T**

SCENE 12: THE RESURRECTION (factual)

CONCLUSION

Whose in the audience?

The four kinds of soil (how people hear and respond to the Gospel)

FACT: The Bible tells us this was a plan, something God had planned for before time, before He created man, so that a plan of redemption was in place to save man should he decide to misuse his free will and disobey God's will. Jesus in no way was a victim here. He gave himself up to death. Talked about before it happened. Willingly offered his life as payment for our sins. 750 years before his horrible scourging, the prophet Isaiah wrote:

From the sole of your foot to the top of your head

*there is no soundness—
only wounds and welts
and open sores,
not cleansed or bandaged
or soothed with oil. Isaiah 1:6*

*I offered my back to those who beat me,
my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard;
I did not hide my face
from mocking and spitting. Isaiah 50:6*

These were fulfilled in Matthew 27:67, 27:26 and Mark 14:65.
1000 years before his crucifixion, David foresaw that Jesus would
be given vinegar to drink while he hung on the cross (Psalm 69:21),
agonize with thirst (Psalm 22:15), and would have his garments
distributed whilst he hung naked on the cross (Psalm 22:18).

David even predicted that Jesus would die prematurely, making it
unnecessary for his legs to be broken: “*he protects all his bones, not
one of them will be broken.*” Psalm 34:20

He did this for you. That is not fiction. It is a fact.
What will you do with Jesus, neutral you cannot be, one day
your heart will be asking what will he do with me.